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ABSTRACT

Several aspects of children's services and teacher education in Sweden, including day care centers and preschool teacher education, are reported by an Australian early childhood educator who, as the recipient of a quest scholarship, visited Sweden in August/September, 1979. The report includes (1) the itinerary of the visit; (2) a few facts about life in Sweden; (3) an overview of family and child care policy; (4) a summary of recommendations of commissions that have affected the development of policy for early childhood education; and (5) accounts of the growth of day care, the development of policy for preschool education, and the funding of child care services. Visits were made to seven day care centers and impressions of basic features of day care provision in Sweden are given. Innovative programs and associated research and evaluation activities; the administration of child care in Malmo; preschool teacher education in Sweden (including different types of training programs and their organization); and the basic dimensions of the Swedish school system are described in detail. Brief descriptions of each visit made are appended. (Author/RH)

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EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES IN SWEDEN

OBSERVATIONS OF SOME FEATURES OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND TEACHER EDUCATION MADE DURING A STUDY VISIT AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 1979

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ADRIENNE FOUNTAIN
Nursery School Teachers' College
Sydney
December 1979

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1. INTRODUCTION

The writer's visit to Sweden in August/September 1979 was one project undertaken during twelve months of Study Leave.

The visit was made possible through the Nursery School Teachers' College and the Swedish Institute.

The Swedish Institute is a government-financed foundation which promotes cultural and educational exchange and disseminates information about Sweden abroad. The Institute awarded the writer a one month Guest Scholarship, arranged accommodation at the University and organised the study program. The program included visits to State and local government bodies with responsibility for childhood services and educational programs as well as visits to Day Care Centres, Preschool Training Colleges, Leisure Centres and Out of School Care Programs.

The experience gave me the opportunity to observe early childhood services in a country that is well known for its initiatives and investments in this area. I believe that I visited Sweden at a most interesting point in its history in relation to the development of childhood services - ten years after the beginning of the expansion program. Throughout this period, there has been constant program innovation and evaluation. On the whole, evaluation reports have shown a highly favourable response towards the organisation of day care. Of late however, some reports have suggested that it is time to look more carefully at the content of the day care program and consequently at the training of preschool teachers.

My warmest and most sincere thanks go to all the people who gave time to show and explain their work and to make me so welcome in Sweden.

The visit was truly one of the highlights of my career as an Early Childhood educator.

2. VISIT PROGRAM

Coordinator: Ms Catharina Mannheimer, Swedish Institute

Date	Visit	Contact
Aug 27	Swedish Institute	Catharina Mannheimer (Program Coordinator)
28	National Board of Health & Welfare	Lena Lindberg
28	Swedish Council for Children's Play	Eva Insulander
29	Färjestadsvagen Day Care Centre, Bromma	Barbro Oldmark
30	Stockholm Social Welfare Board, and a city Day Care Centre	Birgit Rönnblad
31	University of Stockholm	Sten Ronnberg Bertil Sundin Gerda Christenson Ole Nordland
31	A Visit to some Stockholm Parkleken Projects (supervised playgrounds)	
Sep 3	National Board of Education	Elsa Warby
3	Dept of Educational Research: Stockholm Institute of Education	Prof Bengt-Erik Anderson Ingrid Härsman Inger William-Olsson
3	Erfaremhetsverkstan, kulun (work experience Playground)	Michael Crisp
4	Essel'e Stadium	Ake Dahlström
5	Smedshagsskolan: junior level school Vallingby	Mats Brander (teacher) Lars and Helen (grade 6 children)
6	Stockholm Education Authority (Traffic Education Section)	Bengt Lindberg
6	National Traffic Education Foundation	Perry Häkansson Jan Oloflarsson
6	Police Dept - Traffic Education Section	Christer Hök

Sept		
7	Forskoleseminariet, 1 Solna	Marianne Åkerman
10	Riksvadsvig Day Care Centre, Bagarmossons	Vera Alexander
11	Stockholm Social Welfare Board	Birgit Rönnblad
12	(Train to Malmö)	
13	Malmö Social Welfare Board	Kerstin Rivald
13	Gänglätens Forskola	Lard Inplus
14	Malmö Preschool Training College: Lärarhögskolan	Ingrid Lindros Karin Linderoth
14	Lindängehus Day Care Centre	

3. SOME FACTS ABOUT LIFE IN SWEDEN

Of the population of 8.2 million people, approximately 1.2 million live in the Stockholm area.

1.7 million Swedes are said to be under the age of 17, and 7% of the children are of foreign nationality.

The majority of Swedes live in urban areas; 7 out of 10 live in centres of 200 or more inhabitants. A little over twice as many preschool aged children live in multi-family housing blocks as live in single or separate houses.

In the Stockholm area much of the housing is in medium and high rise flats. Careful environmental planning over many years has endeavoured to ensure that housing estates are pleasant and safe places for people to live. Shopping areas and schools are usually away from the main roads and large reserves in the form of parks and forests surround and separate suburbs. The open spaces are greatly appreciated by the Swedes and used extensively for walking and bike riding.

In the city of Malmö, people also live mainly in high and medium rise flats. Though the same kind of suburban planning was evident here as in Stockholm, the flatness of the city and absence of forests make it appear somewhat less attractive for people.

Many people in Sweden would like to live in a separate or villa type home. Although the State and Municipalities have tried to make flat living attractive by providing spacious apartments with excellent community facilities, some would still prefer a home even if this means living away from good transport, schools and shops.

All planned communities have family and childhood services such as a branch of the Social Welfare Department, schools, sessional preschools, day care centres, out of school centres and playgrounds.

4. FAMILY AND CHILD CARE POLICY

A most critical feature underlying Swedish politics and society is the commitment to creating ever increasing states of equality among people regardless of race, sex or background. Most laws, policies and programs are set up with the goal of creating the circumstances to help bring greater equality.

Since about the mid 1960's the goal of equality has focused very deliberately on developing policies that might help make it possible for men and women to be more equal. In a Fact Sheet on Sweden published by the Swedish Institute, it is stated that, "A decisive and ultimately durable improvement in the status of women cannot be attained by special measures aimed at women alone: it is equally necessary to abolish the conditions which tend to assign certain privileges, obligations or rights to man.... Both men and women must be able to play two roles: both must take active part in family life and be involved in work outside the home."

To help make this ideology a reality, a number of family support systems have been introduced.

4.1 Parental Insurance System: First introduced in 1974, it allowed for one parent at a time to stay at home with the baby, until the baby was 7 months old, while receiving 90% of the normal income. A parent not gainfully employed receives 32 Skr per day ($A7.00 approx). The parental benefit is taxable in the same way as ordinary earnings. It is financed 85% through employers' contribution and the rest comes from State Government grants.

A number of small changes have been made to the scheme since 1974 and others are proposed, the exact nature of which will depend on the outcome of the September 1979 election. Prior to the election it was possible for one parent to be home with the baby until it was 9 months. The final 3 months leave can be used in different ways, for example:

- full leave of absence may be taken (nine months);
- used up bit by bit until the child's eighth birthday;
- used to halve or shorten working hours without loss of salary (Melsted 1979).

The Parental Insurance Scheme gives strong encouragement to parents to share their parenthood responsibilities fully. In fact the Social Democrats have said in their election paper on parental insurance that they believe that "the mother and father should be compelled to share parental leave after the first six months to be able to utilise the full benefit. Only in a very few cases should exceptions be made". In the mean time, the Swedish male has not so far rushed the opportunity to take paternity leave. Melsted 1979 states that between 10% and 12% of men now take paternity leave. "Parents in intellectual professions and families where the mother also has a good income make use of the paternity leave option considerably more frequently than for example, the industrial worker family". p 4

4.2 Child Allowance: Since January 1979 this has been 2500 Skr annually (about $A550) tax free for each child up to 16.

4.3 Six Hour Working Day: All parents in Sweden have the legal right to a six hour working day until their child is eight years of age. Parents are also entitled to full leave of absence until the child is eighteen months.

4.4 Care of the Sick Child: A parent may stay home and care for a sick child and receive 90% of his/her income for up to 12 days per year where there is one child, 15 days where there are two children and 18 days where there are three or more children.

4.5 Voluntary Parental Training: All parents are offered voluntary parental training during working hours. This can involve attendance of up to 20 meetings before and after the birth of the child.

4.6 Settling a Child into Day Care: A parent must spend the first two weeks of the day care experience at the centre with the child. No fees are charged during this period. Employers are compelled to give employees time off to do this.

Policies such as those just described can't help but impress the Australian visitor. Everywhere I went I saw evidence of real care for children and families. What concerns many Swedes however, is that life may be being made too easy and that people will lose the ability to take responsibility for planning and providing for their needs and the needs of their children.

5. BACKGROUND TO INNOVATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES IN SWEDEN

During four weeks in Sweden, I was constantly amazed by the number of ideas that seem to have been born, developed and implemented in children's services over a relatively short period of time. I was intrigued as to where the ideas came from; how they have come to receive such general acceptance throughout the field; and what it is that makes the Swedish system appear so different from the system in Australia.

On the question of the origin of ideas, my reading and discussion with people finally led me to realise that a number of commissions established by Parliament in the last ten years are responsible for most of the developments. In Sweden, a commission is set up to investigate situations that seem to be incompatible with policies directed towards creating equality of opportunity.

The following is a summary of some recommendations of some of the commissions that have affected policy development in Sweden as I observed it:

5.1 National Commission on the Children's Environment

The Commission's conclusions have been summarised in a paper by Wittorp, B; Children's Policy in Sweden 1976. Wittorp p3 states:

> "the Commission's most important conclusion is that it is not possible to create a good living environment for children without creating a good society for all. The basis must be the right of all to work, and even distribution of prosperity".

Other conclusions stressed the following:

- The working day must be shortened so that parents have more time for their children;
- Improving the quality of care for the sick child by attaching a "sick child attendant" to each day care centre. Here Wittorp states:

> "it is important that the child attendant should be known to the child. A good solution, would be to affiliate a child attendant to each day nursery and have them participate in the work at the times when few children are sick."

- The need for an "open preschool" with trained staff in every housing area, to serve as a meeting place for parents, child care workers and children.

This final recommendation interested me. Preschool teachers I found believe that their centres are open to parents and certainly parents are welcome. However, I did not see any centres that gave the impression that they had been set up as a community meeting place. In every centre I saw areas set aside for staff relaxation, but no area for parent recreation, discussion or relaxation.

Wittorp does not make it clear how much the National Commission on Children's Environment has had to do with the design of indoor environments in day care centres. To me the use of space and furnishings were a feature of day care in Sweden. Much effort has been made to de-institutionalise the day care setting and Australia has much to learn from Sweden here.

5.2 Family Aid Commission

This Commission was first set up in 1974. Its terms of reference were:

(1) To investigate means of shortening the working hours of parents of small children and providing them with compensation under the parental insurance scheme;

(2) To suggest improvements in the parental insurance scheme;

(3) To examine practical experience concerning provision of good day care.

The Family Aid Commission has presented three reports, each focusing on one of the above terms of reference.

In 1975, the Commission suggested several changes to the parental insurance scheme that have since been implemented. Section 4 describes this scheme as it existed at the time of writing this Report. The proposals were based on "the right of both men and women to work, the equality of the sexes and the possibility of both parents to devote time to their children" (Summary Report - Day Care for Small Children).

The 1979 report focuses on the following:

5.2.1 The Effects of Day Care on Young Children

The report dismisses the relevance of some international research findings on Day Care that have suggested that it may be harmful for children. It does so on the grounds that such research has failed to provide details on the number of children in the day nursery; the size of the group; the

length of the child's day in a centre; the physical environment; staff training; recruitment and roles; and opportunities for parent participation.

The Commission supports the expansion of day care centres in the following statement:

> "Day Care attendance in Sweden where for example, the personnel density is twice that of most other countries and where the physical environment and play materials are of superb quality, is something else than attending nurseries that are less well staffed and less well equipped."

Such a statement is significant in that it describes the methodological focus that has so far underlain day care planning in Sweden.

5.2.2 The Program

Whereas the focus to date appears to have been mainly methodological, the Swedes are beginning to look critically at the content of the programs in the various types of children's services. I was told that people are beginning to be aware that although a quality play environment, a calm setting and sufficient caring adults are vital components of all types of care services, other important features of the day to day experience for children need to be defined and researched.

The Family Aid Commission has put the recommendation for example, that the day care experience needs to be more attuned to the reality of life, suggesting that programs be reorganised to enable children to become more involved in the total life and work of the school. "To a child participating and working together with adults means being taken seriously, being competent and being admitted to the community".

5.2.3 Mixed Age Grouping

The Commission reports that it has been looking at programs with mixed age grouping of children 7 months to 12 years and states, "so far the results of these experiments have been highly encouraging from the point of view of children, parents and staff alike."

5.2.4 Parent Participation

"Cooperation between staff and parents has yet to find its proper channels....parents today have limited opportunities of participating in the work of day nurseries, with the result that they are often shut off from a large sector of their children's lives". The Commission recommends that programs give more attention to developing innovations that will encourage a sense of belongingness and participation from parents.

5.3 Commission on Child Care Centres

This Commission was largely responsible for the 1972 Child Care Act which led to the development of policy which is the basis of all day care today. This policy is fully described in Section 6.4 of this Report.

5.4 Commission on the Internal Workings of Schools

Recommendations from this Commission have led to:

- abolition of grades in the junior and middle levels of the comprehensive school;
- the introduction of S I A into schools. SIA is an educational concept that involves leisure workers and teachers cooperating over the total day to give children a balanced program of study and recreation.

The "reform", as it is called, is regarded as very controversial because it involves lengthening the school day. SIA is much more than an out of school program for children - it is an idea integrating work and leisure throughout the day.

6. EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES IN SWEDEN

6.1 Some Definitions

The following is a brief description of the main early childhood services. I have used the Swedish word for each service followed by the most usual English translation used in this state, New South Wales.

- Förskola - preschool - refers to both short day sessional preschool kindergarten and centre based full day care.

- Daghem - centre based day care - for children 7 months to 7 years from as early as 6.30 am to 6.30 pm (centres open according to hours of need) for children whose parents are working or studying. Parents pay approximately 11% of the total cost.

- Familjedaghem - family day care - can be for children 7 months to 7 years but family day care mothers must take 6 year old children to preschool kindergarten. I was told that it is mostly used for baby day care and where both parents do shift work. Parents pay approximately 14% of the total cost.

- Deltidsförskola - preschool kindergarten - available free of charge to all six year olds in Sweden for three hours per day.

- Fritidshem - out of school hour programs - but the correct translation is leisure centre. Working parents can enrol their 7-10 year olds in these centres and they pay approximately 12% of the cost, which includes a light evening meal (all children have a hot lunch at school).

  Some Fritidshem however, are also open to children as drop-in-leisure centres and there is no charge for this. They simply come if there is something that they would like to do at the centre.

  Out of school care/leisure centres may be in a building attached to, alongside or away from the local school. They may also be part of a day care centre. There is a great deal of experimentation with these programs at the moment, both in terms of who it should be provided for and how it can best be organised. If the SIA program of integrated education and leisure becomes policy throughout Sweden, it will presumably take the place of Fritidshem.

6.2 Some Facts and Figures on the Growth of Day Care

In 1962 there were as few as 12,000 child care places in Sweden. The demand which led to the rapid expansion and large investment in child care began in the mid 1960's. A serious shortage of labour had led women into the work force in increased numbers and with this came the community's need for more and better day care. In 1976, Parliament approved a program which was to create 100,000 new places in day care during the next five years.

By 1982 it is expected that 251,000 places will be available of which 179,300 will be in centre-based day care and 81,900 will be in family day care with need for a further 397,000 places. So the growth in demand is expected to continue.

Today approximately 450,000 preschool children out of 770,000 have mothers who work full time, approximately 65% (figures from Melsted 1979).

6.3 An Administrative Overview

In keeping with the policy of decentralisation, preschool education in Sweden is the responsibility of both the National Government (the State) and Local Government (the municipalities or community). Swedish people pay two taxes, one to the State and one to their community, hence the financial burden of providing services is shared.

At the State level the National Board of Health and Welfare under the ministry of Health and Social Affairs:

- develops and communicates policy and standards on short day and long day care and out of school care/leisure activity programs;
- is responsible for funding approximately half the total costs of day and out of school care;
- undertakes some research and evaluation.

At the Local Government or Community Level, Municipalities:

- implement National Board of Health and Welfare policy according to community needs and views;
- build, equip and administer long day care, family day care (administer only) and sessional preschool centres;
- appoint the staff including the preschool teacher;
- meet total cost of sessional preschool education;
- evaluate some of their programs.

There are approximately fifty municipalities or communities in Sweden, and each is responsible for developing services that reflect the needs of the community.

6. 4 National Board of Health and Welfare - Policy Development

In 1968 the Ministry for Health and Social Welfare set up a Commission on Child Centres under the National Board of Health and Welfare.

The Commission conducted a five year inquiry into preschool education which included the evaluation of a number of experimental programs set up in different parts of the country.

The outcome of the Commission's work was the 1975 Preschool Act which set the stage for expansion and policy development throughout Sweden. The Act required that the municipalities throughout Sweden should:

- set about providing one year of free 3 hours per day preschool for all six year olds;
- make provision for the identification of children with special needs and their admission to preschool from an earlier age;
- provide home language teachers for all non Swedish speaking six year olds in preschools for one hour per week;
- provide resource help to preschool groups where there are handicapped children;
- integrate sessional preschool with full day care where possible;
- see that the aims and quality of sessional preschool and full day care were the same;
- require that all staff in preschool centres, regardless of training, work as a team, all having "pedagogic duties" and therefore reflect the policy that the preschool is the first democratic place of work.
- establish groups of not more than 10 children where the children are 2½ years and younger and not more than 15 where the children are 2½ to 7 years;
- reduce the number of children in a group where there are special needs children in the program;
- provide an overall staff ratio of 1 staff to 2 children in the under 2½ age group, and a staff ratio of 1 staff to 5 children in the 2½ to 7 age range;

. set up integrated or sibling-type groups rather than age defined groups.

Since 1975 the National Board of Health and Welfare has conducted inservice for preschool personnel and written a number of reports and guidelines to inform communities of the changes required by the Act and the implications for local program development and implementation. As a result, each community must now provide the National Board of Health and Welfare with a five year plan which is updated annually. This plan contains both qualitative and quantitative data.

The qualitative data includes:

- information about special program innovations such as the integration of handicapped children;
- evaluation reports;
- special problems unique to that community.

The quantitative data includes:

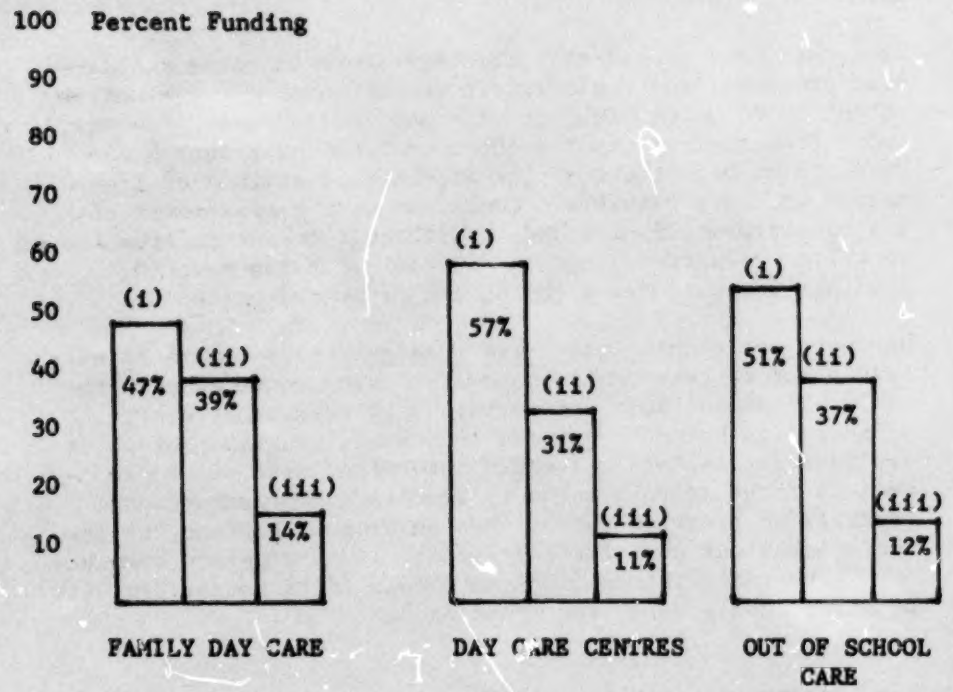
- the number of additional places provided for children by the community since the last report;
- the percentage of children in the community now catered for and the percentage still requiring sessional, full day care and out of school hour care places.

6.5 The Funding of Services

As already mentioned the funding of services is the joint responsibility of the State and local government and, with the exception of sessional preschool, the parents. The distribution of funds is shown in Figure 1 . These figures were obtained from the Malmö Social Welfare Board, but are considered to be representative for the whole of Sweden. Generally, I was told that the State has provided approximately 50% of the day care costs in Sweden. In Malmö, I was told that the State commitment has recently been increased because more and more communities are finding it difficult to maintain standards in the face of escalating costs.

Figure 1 DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDING -

Family Day Care, Day Care Centres and Leisure Centres for the Municipality of Malmo



(i) State
(ii) Municipality
(iii) Parents

It is interesting that although it is State policy that all six year olds be given one year of free preschool experience, it is the community that is responsible for the full capital and recurrent costs.

7. INNOVATION, RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

This is the responsibility of both the National Board and local authorities. In addition the universities do some research in the early childhood area and each regional Institute of Education has a Department of Educational Research.

From this, and considering the investment in early childhood programs, one would expect the research and evaluation output to be quite high and this may be the case. However, apart from summary reports obtained from the Research and Development Department of the Stockholm Institute of Education and very valuable discussions with some members of its research staff, I found it difficult to get information of specific evaluation projects and the use being made of findings for national planning and program development.

However, the people that I met were generally of the opinion that a lot of research is currently being undertaken in the early childhood field and certainly it seems that every municipality has at least one innovative program that it is evaluating. As far as I could determine, most of the innovations focus at this point in time on the organisational features of programs rather than on program content, children's behaviour and staffing issues. As one person commented, "Your research must look as though it is compatible with political goals to attract funding."

7.1 Integrated or Mixed Age Groups in Day Care

An innovation for which Sweden is famous, is that of grouping children in mixed or integrated age groups between the ages of 3 and 7 years (1975 Preschool Act following the recommendations of the 1970 Commission on Child Care Centres).

In 1976, the Ministry of Social Welfare set up the Family Aid Commission which was to initiate further investigations into integration of ages, this time extending the age down to 7 months and up to 12 years. In a summary of its report, Day Care for Small Children, the Commission says that evaluation of programs which integrated children from 7 months showed that:

- the environment becomes less rigid and artificial when it has to cater for children of different ages;
- children encourage and inspire one another in activities of different kinds;
- children of different ages derived a great deal of stimulation and happiness from each other;
- children do not have to change groups and adult companions several times during their preschool years.

In Malmö, a director of a day care centre discussed an evaluative study on one of three trial programs in the Malmö community that had integrated children from 7 months to 7 years. He went to the trouble to translate verbally some of the questions and summary findings of the Malmo report prepared by E Tideman and H Johnsson. The report focused on the opinions of parents and teachers in one centre towards total integration of all ages of children in the day care centre. The evaluators sought information:

- on whether older children were found to exemplify caring behaviour towards the younger ones;
- about the selection of playmates in an integrated setting;
- on specific behavioural changes both at the centre and at home following the re-arrangement to groups with the possible age range of 7 months to 7 years.

The evaluators reported that:

- the majority of parents were in favour of the innovation right from the beginning - only three expressed doubts and these were focused on concerns for the care and safety of the younger children;
- parents liked their sibling children to be together in the one group; they believed that it facilitated family unity and involved a parent in relating to only one set of staff;
- teachers were in favour of being able to follow children right through the early childhood period, believing that the relationship became stronger and a more total perspective on child development is facilitated;
- teachers believed that the mixed age grouping of younger with older children created a more natural atmosphere and was less demanding on resources;
- although there were early reports of younger children being fussed over by older children, this stopped as the younger ones learned to set limits that the older ones learned to respect;
- in the main the older children showed concern for the younger ones and conflicts between them were rare;
- over all the group, there was much less conflict and more responsible, tolerant behaviour;
- the older children mainly chose their playmates from among peers of a similar age.

7.2 Research Projects Conducted through Department of Educational Research - Stockholm Institute of Education

Here I met the Institute's Director, Professor Bengt-Erik Anderson, Inger William Olsson and Ingrid Harsman. These people told me of their research and evaluation in the field of Child Development.

- Ingrid Harsman has been looking at what happens when the baby is first put into day care.

  She has observed 26 infants, 6 months to 12 months before and after their enrolment in day care. A control group of 26 infants cared for by their mothers in their homes was also observed.

  The central focus of the Harsman study is on adjustment to day care which has involved observing the changes in attachment to mothers and day care staff.

- Inger William Olsson has done some formative evaluation involving the development of the "team" as this applies to working with children and families in a day care centre. The 1975 Preschool Act declared that all staff in a day care centre including the child nurses and untrained staff have equal teaching responsibilities.

  I gained the impression that the role and responsibilities of the preschool teacher as a possible team leader have not been defined. Rather she/he is one of a group of adults who work with a group of children.

  Dr William Olsson's work here has so far involved a search for methods of getting people to work together effectively in teams.

- Professor Bengt-Erik Anderson has compared the development of six groups of children in Family Day Care and centre-based Day Care. He observed the children for one year using the Griffiths Baby Scale and found no real differences between the two groups.

  Six years later in 1978, Erik Anderson located the children again to see what their day care history had been. He found that about half the children had maintained a stable placement while half had had more than one change. Some had had many changes.

The Institute under Professor Bengt Erik Anderson is currently involved in an international study on Family Support and Development, which besides Sweden,

includes Great Britain, USA, West Germany and Israel with data collection being done simultaneously in all five countries.

This is a five year study of families - the common feature of all participating families being that there was a three year old in the family at the beginning of the project.

The object is to look at the formal and informal support systems that exist in the community and the way that they are being used by families. They are interested in the kinds of stresses that impinge on the family and the use made of support systems, if any, to relieve some of the stress.

In Sweden 125 families are included from eight different neighbourhoods. Half of the selected families are headed by one parent only.

7.3 Local Innovations

Towards the end of my visit to Sweden, I became aware that program innovation at the community level was common throughout Sweden. As one person commented, "we're not sure yet about many things, in day care particularly. Some programs appear to work better than others, some ways of doing it may be better suited to particular communities or groups of people. That is what we are trying to find out".

It seems that each community has at least one innovation and some communities have several. Some have been set up in collaboration with other organisations such as a commission or university. The innovations are usually evaluated by the psychologist and or social worker employed by Community Department of Social Welfare, but universities and other organisations can be involved.

7.3.1 University of Goteburg is collaborating with various departments in evaluating innovations that involve two sessional preschool programs in Goteborg. These innovations concern the integration of 6 year olds in a preschool program with 7 year olds in their first year of the Junior Primary Department of the comprehensive school. Each class is team taught by a preschool teacher and a junior primary teacher.

This will be an interesting innovation to watch because at the present time, preschool is controlled at the state level by the Ministry of Health and Welfare while Comprehensive School is controlled by the Ministry of Education.

7.3.2 Family Aid Commission, in collaboration with one municipality, has set up a program that is experimenting

with a new form of parent participation. The following is a description taken direct from the 1979 Summary Report, Day Care for Small Children:

> "As part of the scheme, parents and staff are sharing responsibilities and decision-making powers concerning financial and educational matters. The day nursery has an outline budget, within which the parents and staff make their own financial priorities....In order to be part of the decision-making, parents need to be familiar with the day nursery, the children, the staff and the other parents. One way of acquiring this knowledge is to take part in the everyday work at the nursery. The parents get the day nursery places for their children through the regular waiting list procedure.
>
> Our experimental nursery is a new one in a flat with a floor space of 140 sq meters, and designed to receive twelve children aged seven months to twelve years. The staff comprises two children's nurses and one preschool teacher. Each participating parent - mothers and fathers alike- has to spend an average of 1½ days per month working at the day nursery together with staff. In this way there is always one parent on duty. Parents can choose between working continuously for a week or working occasional days. The municipality pays the parents at the going rate for children's nurses. Another and perhaps administratively simple way of paying parents for their services is to reduce charges at day nurseries practising this type of parental participation.
>
> Experience so far has been highly encouraging. All the parents have managed, one way or another to arrange the necessary leave of absence from their regular jobs. Many different occupations and income levels are represented. Only two parents have declined the offer of places on account of the compulsory participation arrangement. No comprehensive evaluation has yet been undertaken, because the activities have only been in progress for a year. Both parents and staff have displayed a great deal of active interest in this type of day nursery and the scheme has also considerable interest among staff and parent groups in other parts of Sweden". p 31

7.3.3 Malmö Municipality

Innovative programs here include:

. Program for children from Latin America. A group of Spanish speaking children has been

integrated with Swedish children in one day care centre and looked after by Spanish speaking nurses. There is also a Spanish speaking preschool teacher who visits to support the program. This program has a special State Grant for one year and will be evaluated by staff at the Malmo Department of Social Welfare.

. Mixed Age Grouping 0-7

Malmö has three centres with groups that are totally age integrated from 7 months to 7 years. These have already been described in Section 7.1.

. Program for Handicapped Children

Malmö has one centre which has a number of handicapped children with some normal children integrated. The handicapped children are taught by trained, experienced preschool teachers who have completed a further one year course in Special Education.

7.3.4 The Stockholm Municipality

(1) Education for Life Program

This was the only program that I heard of in Sweden that was attempting to look at the actual content of the child's day. The program has arisen from a debate that is currently going on among some concerned people about the effects of isolating children from their families, neighbours, community and activities. It is a response to what might be described as the "reality separation" problem in day care - a reaction which is often voiced in Australia concerning centre based day care. The problem is summarised by the Family Aid Commission as follows: (1979: 19)

> "Too much scope has been given to play activities, handicraft and educational materials, while on the other hand, everyday chores have been overlooked. Children need to feel that they are making themselves useful and that they are able, at an early age, to participate and work together with older children and adults in tasks that are necessary and of concern to all. Adults who devote themselves to getting things out for the children, clearing up after children, serving things to the children and keeping the children amused, present a one-sided view of adult living and thwart some of the important objectives of day nursery activities. To a child, participating and working together with adults means being taken seriously, being competent and being admitted to the community. In this way adults and children form a single community".

The Education for Life Program that I visited, had very recently moved into renovated apartments in the centre of

Stockholm. The complex for about forty children occupied the three floors of the building and at least twelve rooms. There are approximately thirty day care children, 7 months to 7 years who mainly use the upper two floors, and 10 out of school hour children who mainly use the ground floor of the building.

At the time of my visit, most of the rooms were bare except for basic equipment, because staff and children wanted to "live" there for a while to determine their needs.

The Program involves all the "house" (centre) staff taking turns with groups of children to do all of the "house" tasks, that is, to take care of everybody's needs. The "house" does not employ a cleaner or a cook, rather there are extra staff and all staff share all duties including gardening, shopping, cleaning, cooking, assisted at all times by children. During the 1½ hours that I was in the school with Mrs Ronnblad from the Stockholm Department of Social Welfare, I observed:

- that some children had gone with some staff to collect the 7 year olds who had started school that week (new children only attend school for a few hours during their first weeks and they don't all go at the same time);

- about four of the smallest children were asleep on mats in a sleeping room;

- that three children were helping to clean up an activity area that had involved painting activities;

- that four children were helping a member of staff mop floors;

- a group of seven children were in a large sunny kitchen preparing the midday meal. Here children from about 3½ years to seven years were seated on high stools at a large table. Two of the older children were mixing the mince and breadcrumbs for meat balls while other children were slicing vegetables including beans that had been grown on the "house farm" (a small plot of land leased from the Stockholm Council in easy walking distance of the centre).

  Two of the children were being guided by two staff in how to use the knives to cut the beans, while a third member of staff watched over the stove.

  I asked the staff about the children's attitude to preparing their own meal for one week in every four weeks:

  "Not all children want to do it every day for a

whole week, but we say to them that their needs and the needs of other people in the house have to be met and that is their responsibility as well as ours. They must learn how to do the work of caring for themselves".

It will be interesting to see what happens to this concept of program content in the future and particularly what modifications/developments are implemented. For example, if this becomes a widely accepted approach, will it mean introducing a lot of structure or will centres find ways of making participation slightly more flexible ?

(2) Small Group Day Care

Such centres are quite common in Stockholm and are usually set up in one of the ground floor units of a housing block. One large flat usually caters for 12 children. The centres are innovative in that they are seeking a compromise between the large group centres and family day care. Some small group centres at present only have children 3 years to 7 years but others have the whole age range including some out of school children. Such centres are usually staffed by one preschool teacher and two child nurses.

On the Student Housing Estate of Stockholm University, there are four such centres. Together they form a complex under the direction of a managing teacher. Although they work independently, there is a staff relaxation/meeting room in one of the flats and all staff meet as a total planning team at least once per month.

As the meals in day care in Sweden are all frozen, preparing the lunch is simply a matter of heating and serving food. Hence a cook is not employed in a small group centre.

8. DAY CARE CENTRES

Seven visits were made to day care centres. Five of the centres were in Stockholm and two were in Malmö. The length of time spent in each centre varied from one hour to a full day. The centres visited were situated at Bromma, Satra, Stockholm, Forskarbacken (University of Stockholm), Bagarmossens, Ganglatens-Malmö, and Lindangehus-Malmö.

8.1 Staffing

In Sweden the recommended ratio of staff to children is one equivalent full-time adult to five children aged between 2½/3 years and 7 years in groups of no more than 15, and one equivalent full-time adult to 2/2½ children aged between 7 months and 2½/3 years in groups of no more than 10 children.

Whereas most municipalities in Sweden have met the regulations relating to the number of children in a group, it is said that wide variations still exist in relation to child/staff ratio. Whereas all the centres in Stockholm met or came close to meeting the regulations one of the Malmö centres visited believed that its staffing and the staffing of many other Malmö day care centres was inadequate. This centre had 2½ staff to 10 children 7 months to 3 years and 2¼ staff to 16 children 3 to 7 years. Interestingly, this was the only centre where I saw evidence of distressed children, that is children who needed extended rather than intermittent one to one contact with an adult but were not able to get the help that they needed. In this particular situation, one adult was caring for five children in a room on her own. Three of these children needed a one to one contact for most of the ten minutes I was in the room. A second member of staff came to assist towards the end of this period. The Director of this centre said that he believed that staffing ratios are the biggest issue in day care at the present time.

To an Australian one of the first features of day care to make an impact is the amount of staff in most centres, and particularly the number of adults that children are required to relate to. Many staff do not work full time and all centres have "extra pairs of hands" such as students, unemployed persons, conscientious military objectors, the sick child nurse (if there are no sick children to look after in their homes), an extra staff member for general support if there is a handicapped child integrated in the group, perhaps a home language teacher and a parent settling their child into the program.

The big increase in the number of preschool trained teachers in Sweden in the last five years has meant that there is now at least one trained preschool teacher to every group of children whether they be 7 months to

2½/3 years or 2½/3 years to 7 years or 7 months to 7 years. However, I learnt that this is a very recent achievement for Sweden. Even in 1978 there were still some younger groups that were without a preschool teacher. Most groups have one preschool teacher, one or two child nurses and perhaps an untrained person depending on the number of children and the ratios.

It will be interesting to watch the staffing directions in the next five years now that all groups have a preschool teacher. For example,

- Will the ratios in the so called poorer communities improve?
- Will there be wide scale unemployment of preschool teachers (to this observer it seems that Sweden is headed in this direction because there are currently 4,000 new recruits entering preschool colleges annually)?
- Will the State of Sweden and its municipalities be prepared to increase funding and or parental contribution to enable more trained preschool teachers to be employed as staff vacancies occur?
- If more preschool teachers are employed in the future instead of nurses and untrained people as many people believe will be the case, what will happen to the child nurse training in the Higher School and what will the implications be for the current pattern/structure of courses in preschool colleges?

8.2 <u>The Team Approach</u>

Day Care Centres are organised into groups (units). A centre may have as few as one group (a centre in a flat might only have twelve children) or as many as seven groups (some centres have as many as 90 children). Each group has its own team of workers. In some cases the preschool teacher is seen as the team leader, but as all staff have teaching responsibilities, many centres avoid nominating a leader. All staff work an eight hour day if they work full time. The Preschool Act states that all staff must have "pedagogic duties" and that the team approach is the structure around which dialogue, cooperation and other democratic behaviours shall be modelled for the children. The wording of the Act suggests that the parents are part of the team. The Act does not declare that the preschool teacher is to be the team leader.

My interpretation of the team from observation suggested that in practice it meant that all staff shared all work including relating to all children in the group, going on outings, working with children in specific play/craft/interest areas, supervising children, eating with them, cleaning up and planning the program. Everyone sees themselves and is seen by others as a teacher.

It was of particular interest to me that considering the

generous nature of the child staff ratios, no one could tell me of any centre where the group team divided the children so that certain children were the special responsibility of one or two members of staff.

Apart from the formative evaluation study on developing patterns of team work by Inger William-Olsson at the Stockholm Institute of Education, I did not hear of any research on staff roles and relationships with children.

Two hours per week of planning time is available to each member of staff. In most of the centres visited, I was told that the whole team get together once per week to discuss the children's behaviour. This usually takes place in the middle of the day with a team being relieved by the Director of a centre and probably one other person from one of the other teams.

While the team approach is interesting, ideologically there are a number of issues that may be the focus of some debate in the future:

- if the preschool teacher is the leader and it appears that in some cases he/she is, what, if any, are his/her roles as a leader - is this just a name with no foundation?
- is it realistic to assume that all staff are equal and therefore have equal rights in program development and implementation when not all staff have the same kind of background preparation for this work?
- if there are no real leaders, who takes the initiative when decisions have to be made in a hurry?
- what is the role of the overall centre leader (director) in relation to program development and staff development and parents?

8.3 Meetings

All the day care centres visited hold monthly centre staff meetings. These are usually in the evenings and staff receive allowance in their working hours to cover the time spent at these meetings and at parent meetings. There are usually about four parent meetings per year which are mainly to talk about the children and the program.

8.4 The Day Care Environment

The quality of the indoor environment for children in day care must make an immediate impact on a visitor from Australia. Although some day care staff expressed the opinion that some centres still have an institutional quality, by Australian standards none of the designs and centre presentations that I saw could on its own create such a feeling. However, it is important to remember that building design, organisation and furnishing are not the only factors involved in creating

a "home-like" feeling. What goes on in the centre is what is really significant - the program and the relationships between staff and children.

All centres visited whether they were in a converted apartment or specifically designed building allowed children access to at least three different rooms. All the centres had a central playroom/all purpose room where children eat, participate in whole group tasks and usually do craft-type activities. Two adjoining rooms provided for different needs according to the use being made of the shared resource rooms in the centre. One of the group rooms was always set up with couches, cushions, and mats for reading, resting and other quiet pursuits. The third group room was used for either block play, socio-dramatic play, or large physical activity. Larger centres had communal rooms such as a wet room for water play and a large motor activity room which in some cases was rather like a mini-gym with ropes and swings suspended from ceiling frames.

All centres regardless of size provided all of the basic activities found in an Australian preschool. As children have to play indoors for much of the winter, there are excellent indoor facilities for woodwork, water play, climbing, swinging, etc.

A noticeable feature of the furnishings in the older groups is the absence of mini-furniture. Rather most of the furnishings present as a kind of compromise between the child and the adult world. In the main living area there are two large tables usually round, that serve as eating and working areas. One of the tables is almost but not quite adult height while the other is equivalent to the height we would provide for four or five year olds. If necessary, children use cushions but where very young children are integrated they are either on an adult's lap or seated in a high chair.

Groups for children 7 months to 2½/3 years have furniture which is very similar to the furniture we have in Australia, that is, considerably scaled down in height and size.

Most of the day care centres I visited communicated a home-like atmosphere to me with lots of "softness" by way of plants, flowers, couches and cushions.

The outdoor environments I can only describe as generally disappointing which has possibly got something to do with the climate. The summer is short and the winter long and severe. I saw no equipment presentation or environmental planning that was noticably better than in Australia. The only interesting feature shared by most centres was a large outdoor pine bench table with bench seats which were used for snacks during the summer months.

8.5 Day Care Food Service

Children are well fed in the Swedish Day Care Centre and in most of the centres visited trouble was taken with the presentation.

Most of the food is prepared in Municipal kitchens which also service the Comprehensive Schools. Food is stored in a deep freeze at the day care centre and heated just before serving. The diet is nutritionally planned and menu guides help centre staff plan balanced, attractive and varied meals. Most centres serve frozen vegetables, but some buy fresh in-season vegetables when these are available.

Some centres are involved in providing three meals per day and two snacks. Breakfast consists of fruit juice, porridge, cheese, crispbread and milk, served at about 8.00 am for children who do not have breakfast at home. Morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea are taken by most of the children. For school children who come back to the centre in the afternoon, there is a high tea at about 5.00 pm (Fritidshem children).

The food is brought to the group day room/family room on a trolley. Tables are set and food is served by the children. Always I saw excellent quality china, glass and cutlery. I was interested that staff did not always eat with the children, though some staff told me that they believed that day care workers should. I learnt that teachers in the Comprehensive School receive their meal free of charge if they eat with the children in the school dining room, but day care centre staff have to pay for their lunch.

8.6 General Impressions

I believe that in the seven day care centres visited, I probably saw an example of the very worst and much of the very best of day care in Sweden.

In the worst I recognised most of the features of poor quality day care in Australia. I say most because unlike many day care centres in Australia, the environment was spacious and the staff/child ratios were high. In Australia we tend to believe that if we could get better ratios, all our problems would be solved. This is not necessarily so if centre staff do not seem to know how to use their time effectively. The familiar characteristics that I identify with poor day care and which I saw in one centre are staff standing around talking to one another, untidy, scruffy/dirty play areas and children left to their own devices for longish periods of time when adult conversation and participation may have led the children into more constructive purposeful play.

In the better centres, I saw the excellent indoor environ-

ments already described, and in addition a relaxed unpressured program where children came before routines. In addition, I saw adults with children; playing with them, looking with them, working alongside them, reading with them, listening with them and walking with them. In these centres, every effort was being made to make full use of the immediate neighbourhood as well as to involve the children in many of the kinds of activities that would perhaps be part of their daily experience if they were at home.

8.7 Outings

A feature of day care in Sweden is that all children are taken out of the centre at least once per week and more frequently in good weather. The director of one centre said, "all children leave this day care home every day". One adult takes two children and babies sit opposite each other in double strollers. Common outings are local walks, excursions into the forest, visits to the shops and for the older children, trips to museums, exhibitions, restaurants and the theatre.

8.8 Sleep

Provision is made for sleep. All children who need to, sleep or rest on mattresses with zip towelling covers. The mattresses are laid out on the floor usually in a sleeping room, and when not in use, stack one on top of the other in a cupboard. Children usually sleep when they need to and younger children are put down to rest according to their own individual routine. However, there are many variations in different centres and in one I visited, all of the younger children were put to bed after lunch in much the same way as in an Australian day care centre.

In the centres where the period immediately following lunch was observed, the older children (3-7 years) chose whether or not they wanted to sleep and how they would rest. At the conclusion of lunch, each child quite independently went off and chose a quiet activity. In two centres I saw the following:

- children put themselves onto a mattress in a rest room and go to sleep;
- two children go into a building room and make a house and bed out of large foam blocks. When it was completed they turned out the lights, drew the curtains and went into their house where they rested for about twenty minutes;
- two children go into a rest room and settle themselves on a comfortable couch under many covers/ blankets and listen to stories on a record player for one hour before they got up;

- three children take out their weaving and work on that for a period;
- a small group of children settle themselves on lots of cushions for cuddles and stories with one member of staff;
- two children return to complete various activities they had started during the morning;
- six children sit with a staff member at a table to work on a structured craft activity.

8.9 Activities and Materials

The activities and materials provided are very similar to those provided in the better equipped day care centres in Australia. The unique materials however, were: interesting durable wheeled toys for out of doors; excellent equipment for indoor large physical activities; large woodwork benches with proper tools and large foam blocks for indoor building, and a wide selection of materials for weaving on children's individual weaving frames.

8.10 The Program

It is difficult to describe a typical program because the better centres have a good deal of flexibility and aim towards a degree of variability. Lunch is the only fixed feature of the program for the older children. At the time I was in Sweden, the children were outdoors a lot of the time (it was the end of summer). In one centre I spent 1½ hours walking in a neighbouring forest with a group of 3-7 year olds. A handicapped child in the group was taken in his stroller. Each child had a bag in which to put items of interest including blueberries that were later eaten with yogurt.

My overall impression was that there was less pressure on children to conform to a set routine. With so many small rooms, individual or small groups of children were able to continue a play episode over longish periods of time, perhaps even days. I saw activities interrupted by walks etc, which were later resumed. This is of course what happens in a "good" play environment in a home situation and it is what Australian day care centres have never been able to provide. It is also what happens in the adult world in relation to personally worthwhile projects such as making a piece of furniture or writing an article or making a dress.

8.11 Special Program Provisions

8.11.1 Home Language Training: Approximately 7% of the preschool population are immigrants. To meet their special needs each municipality provides a home language trainer for all 6 to 8 year olds for whom Swedish is their second language. This is an innovation in Sweden, so at this point in time home language trainers are not necessarily qualified teachers. Many colleges in Sweden however now have special courses to prepare people for this type of teaching. The object of the home language training is to communicate with the child in the classroom in his own language - to provide the child with some of the classroom content in his own language in the presence of the teacher and the other children and to provide a link between home and school. Such resource teachers in Sweden are strongly encouraged to give all their support in the classroom, that is, not to remove children. In the day care centre the home language trainer participates with the child in the normal activities. Each child gets approximately two 40 minute visits per week but where there are several children with a shared nationality, the trainer may be at the school for several hours per week." The home language trainer is also expected to help the preschool staff and the family in their dealings with each other." (Stockholm Department of Social Welfare.

8.11.2 The Handicapped Child: The presence of a handicapped child in the program entitles a centre to extra support staff (about 20 hours per week per child). As such children are usually also participating in special programs that focus directly on their problem, the support in the day care centre or preschool is only meant to provide extra help to the full time staff. The resource person is not attached to the child but rather helps out generally.

8.11.3 Home Attendant for the Sick Child: Such a person is available where a parent is unable to stay home from work to care for a sick child. Home attendants for sick children are employed by the Community Department of Social Welfare and are now attached to day care centres to service the needs of families in that centre. This of course means that children and parents know the sick child attendant, because when there are no sick children, the attendant gives extra help at the day care centre.

8.11.4 New Children: The first two weeks of day care in Sweden are free and a clause in the parental insurance scheme makes it easy for parents to take leave of absence from their jobs to be with their children during this period.

All children beginning day care in Sweden are settled by a parent, which apart from providing the child with a supportive transitional period, allows the parent and centre staff to develop a working relationship. I met and spoke with several such parents on my visits and all told me that they believed that the settling in period was essential for them as well as their child - they got to know what the child's day away from home was like.

8.12 The Role of Parents in Day Care

One gets the impression in Sweden that parents feel fairly comfortable in their day care centre. Parent/staff relation ships are established during the initial compulsory two weeks settling period, and in all centres I was told that parents are free to come and go as they like.

All centres have fairly regular parent/staff meetings (at least 4 per year) which are held in the evening and most centre staff participate with the parents in organising occasional weekend family outings or functions.

However, apart from the Family Aid Commission experimental program described on page 28, I did not see or hear of any examples of parents participating directly in the program. Generally I got the impression that the concept or ideal of "care sharing" and all that this involves in terms of care and developmental continuity between home and day care centre, has not been explored in any depth yet in Sweden. Considering the high child/staff ratios this was somewhat surprising.

8.13 Summary - An Appraisal of Day Care

In this section I have attempted to provide an overview of the main features of day care in Sweden that have been introduced in the constant search for day care that is a developmentally and psychologically positive experience for children.

I am mindful of the fact that one must be careful about making judgements on a visit that was as short as mine. However, I doubt if anyone could argue against the fact that day care has become a political necessity because of the commitment to making a reality out of the ideology of equality between women and men. With 65% of women with preschool children in the workforce, quality day care for the Swedes is an essential investment in the future of their country. They simply can't afford not to have it and they can't afford not to do it well.

Thus, the most interesting aspects of day care for this visitor were:

- the constant innovation that occurs in an effort to improve day care for children;

- the recognition that a young baby needs the full time care and attention of one person, preferably within the family, and hence the provision for a woman or a man to stay at home for the first nine months of their baby's life;

- the high adult child ratios in the centres;

- the family group structure;

- the quality of the environment for children and staff.

Because of the brief period of my visit, it is with some hesitation that I identify what appeared to me to be possible future issues as the day care movement enters a new phase in its development - a phase of consolidation following ten years of rapid expansion.

So far in Sweden, most of the innovation has had, I believe a methodological thrust rather than a content thrust; that is, the main concern has been with how the program can best be organised rather than with the content of the child's day. This was quite fascinating for an Australian early childhood educator because I believe we have almost the opposite situation here. Methodologically, large day care centres have changed little in Australia in the last 20 years, but the same cannot be said about the content of the program. We have been significantly influenced by developmental and curriculum research from the United States with the result that the teacher education is now committed to a program which requires students to come to grips with a wide range of theories about many aspects of development and teaching.

My observations in day care centres and the two colleges visited did not give me the impression that this was the case in Sweden. Rather there is much emphasis on practical and methodological factors such as working together in teams and understanding what a quality play environment involves. These are very important and commendable components of preschool teacher preparation and Australian colleges could, I am sure, benefit by re-thinking their methods of teaching in these areas. However, I feel that given the highly developed nature of Swedish society, much more research will need to be done in the area of program content and the role of the teacher in relation to program development if Sweden is to continue to improve the quality of its day care.

I believe that the professional level of the preschool teacher will need to be upgraded and more opportunities should be created for teachers to continue studying in the areas such as family studies, child development and research.

With regard to child staff ratios, for example, Sweden is fast approaching the optimum and it is therefore, critical that the following questions should be investigated:

- How many staff in a day care group can a child relate to effectively - is it efficient to have all group staff relating equally to all children?

- How much of staff time is actually spent in one to one contact with children and what is the nature of this contact?

- How much continuity is there between the child's home and the day care centre and how can both sets of care givers work more closely together?

- Can a team function effectively without a leader; in other words, is it possible to have comprehensive program planning without a professional whose role it is to initiate, guide and encourage other staff in their teaching duties?

- What role are day care centres playing in supporting the family and fostering understanding of the family's role in the development and education of its children?

9. EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES AT THE MUNICIPAL LEVEL - THE MALMÖ EXAMPLE

9.1 Overview

Malmö is a city of 25 000 people, situated at the southern tip of Sweden opposite Copenhagen, Denmark.

The Department of Child Care within the municipality's Social Welfare Board is responsible for:

- Day care - 120 centres cater for 4000 children;
- Sessional (3 hour) Preschools - 80 centres cater for about 3000 children;
- Family day care - 1000 Day Care mothers care for 3000 children;
- Out of school care - 45 programs care for 675 children.

9.2 Applications

Families seeking to place a child in any of the above programs do this by placing an application with the Social Welfare Board. Applications are not made directly to individual centres. At the time at which this visit was made, Malmö had 1000 children registered on its waiting list for a place in a day care centre. Applications are held on computer and except in the case of special need are taken in the order of the date of application. The five year plan for Malmö had previously suggested that all day care needs would be met by 1985. Authorities now say that this is unlikely. The municipality does not have the money.

9.3 Administration of Child Care in Malmö

The Social Welfare Board employs 80 people to administer its total program. The municipality is divided into five districts, each of which is subdivided into a number of divisions (average of 6 divisions per district). There is one adviser for each division who takes care of all the staffing for all of the programs, that is, leisure care, day care and preschool kindergarten, family day care. In addition each district has a team leader (chief) and an education consultant. A consultant:

- arranges continuing education programs (about 15 hours per year for each staff member);
- helps staff improve their program and teaching.

The consultant to whom I spoke said that it was difficult to give the amount of support needed because she alone was

expected to give a consultative service to 30 day care centres, 5 out of school programs, 20 sessional pre-schools and 200 family day care homes.

Malmö also employs a social worker and a psychologist equivalent to about 1½ full time people per district. They help with interpersonal staff difficulties, parent/teacher communication problems, and undertake program evaluation.

9.4 Special Support Staff

- For the Sick Child - 200 extra staff (child attendants/nurses) who are based at day care centres to care for children in their own home when they are ill;

- For the Handicapped Child - 56 people are employed to visit centres and give 20 hours per week of help for each handicapped child or child with a special problem;

- The Migrant Child - here the Social Welfare Board makes use of the "Home Language" teachers employed in the schools. These teachers visit preschools and day care centres to work with 6 year old migrant children needing home language support.

9.5 Special Programs

Malmö, like other municipalities in Sweden, has a number of experimental or trial programs. For example:

- Program for Children from Latin America

  Here a group of Spanish speaking children are integrated with Swedish children in one day care centre and looked after by Spanish speaking nurses. There is also a Spanish speaking preschool teacher who visits to support the program. The program has a special State grant for one year. It will be evaluated by the psychologist and/or social worker employed in that district.

- Mixed Age Grouping 0 - 7 Years

  There are three centres in Malmö where each group of children contains a mixture of children from possible 7 months to 7 years.

  These programs are also being evaluated.

10. PRESCHOOL TEACHER EDUCATION

Overview

University and Teacher Education are the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs.

The administrative and policy making body for the Ministry is the National Board of Universities and Colleges.

Higher education, like most other services in Sweden is decentralised. To help facilitate community involvement, the country has been divided into six Higher Educational Regions and each has a university and a Regional Board of Higher Education.

Universities are responsible for some educational research and evaluation, but many regions also have a separate Department for Educational Research. A summary of recent research projects in the early childhood area undertaken by the Stockholm Institute of Education, Department of Educational Research appears in Section 7.

There are approximately twenty-five preschool teacher training colleges in Sweden, three of which are in the Stockholm region. Until recently, preschool and each of the three levels of the comprehensive school teacher training have in the main taken place in separate schools on different campuses. Although courses tend to be discrete, colleges are linked administratively. The three Stockholm preschool colleges for example, share the same Principal and Board of Governors and together they form one School in the Stockholm Institute of Education.

In 1975, the number of places for people seeking to train as preschool teachers in Sweden doubled due to the expansion in preschool and day care services. Several new colleges have been opened and existing colleges have substantially increased their numbers. For example, in 1975/76, 2650 preschool teachers graduated from colleges in Sweden. In 1977/78, the number had increased to 3600. (Figures taken from the National Board of Universities and Colleges - Facts and Figures 1978).

10.1 National Board of Universities and Colleges - Its Function in Relation to Preschool Teacher Education

The National Board is responsible for developing broad guidelines to implement policy decided by Parliament and the Ministry. The National Board lays the foundation for tertiary studies throughout the country.

The main features which distinguish Preschool Teacher Education throughout Sweden are:

1) There are different courses for students who enrol with different types of background experience

Type A: A 50 point course of approximately 50 weeks or 1½ years. This program is for people who have trained and worked as a children's nurse in some kind of pre-school setting. The Children's Nurse Certificate is obtained by taking a two year Children's Nurse Course in the Higher School. Such a course would be one of many vocational programs that are offered as two year courses in the Higher School (years 10 and 11). These entrants to Preschool Teacher Training are seen as having completed a full secondary program of studies and to have field related work experience.

Type B: 80 point course of approximately 80 weeks or 2 years. The program caters for people who have completed a full secondary education but have not followed the nurse line of study in their last two or three years of school. Instead, they may have undertaken other vocational programs or a more academic course. However, people admitted to the 80 point course have all some working experience as an aide in a preschool.

Type C: 100 point course of approximately 100 weeks or 2½ years. This course is for people who come straight from the Higher School, that is, they have a full secondary education, but no work experience or child nurse training. The 100 point course is completely new to the Swedish Preschool Colleges; in fact many colleges do not yet have graduates in the field. Up until 1976, work experience in a preschool was an essential prerequisite for admission to a training college.

Type D: Bi-Lingual Courses: Many colleges have one or two bi-lingual teacher training courses. Students who are enrolled are considered to be fluent in both Swedish and their first language. Some colleges have an 80 point course for students who have some prior preschool work experience and a 100 point course for students coming straight from school.

In the bi-lingual preschool teacher training course, students are trained to teach migrant children at preschool in their family language. Groups of students undertaking such courses are homogeneous: that is, all the Greek students are in one class and all the Finnish students are in another, etc.

2) Students must experience a close group atmosphere and team work during teacher training

Students entering a preschool college in Sweden are allo-

cated to a group (class) which is usually about 25-30 students. These students are taught as one group for the full duration of the program. During this time, they will probably have contact with about 12 teachers (college lecturers). There could be as many as six parallel classes in one year in a college, but the groups are rarely combined nor does the group composition change. This is in keeping with the belief that the class group atmosphere is vital to teaching; that is, it facilitates in-depth relationships, commitment and responsibility for one another.

All courses are compulsory. There are no electives as such. However, there are unallocated times in all courses which are there to be used in a number of ways including providing content that is related to the special needs of individual trainee groups.

The group or class, besides participating in and learning from course work , has considerable responsibility for planning and evaluation of courses and for personal and group evaluation. To facilitate this, it is policy in Sweden for every preschool teacher training class to be subdivided into about five small groups. Specific groups work on specific courses, that is, they don't all try to work on all courses. The relevant lecturers are thus all allocated a planning group. The planning groups meet about every three weeks and are considered to be an important part of the course. Course content, methods of teaching, student participation and standard of student work are discussed and decisions are made as to how unallocated course hours should be used.

Whole class evaluation sessions are also held regularly.

The ideology behind such organisation is expressed in many documents about student evaluation and teacher preparation. For example, the 1979 Commission on Teacher Education stated, "it is important to avoid presenting the goals of the school and of the teaching profession as though they were easily attainable, already attained or final. Thus teacher education needs to equip the teacher for the active consideration of questions concerning the way in which school work is done, the way it ought to be done and the way in which changes can be accomplished". p 9

In the Swedish preschool college every member of staff has approximately forty hours of non allocated time per semester that must be used in face to face consultation with students. It is used for:

- meetings as already described;
- extra tuition for small groups;
- the division of the full class into two groups for some activities;
- team teaching with other members of staff.

3) Students are not to be given marks for academic or practical studies

The main criterion for assessment is attendance. Much of the work is group work, so it follows that there is a good deal of group evaluation.

I saw several situations in the colleges I visited where students had made things to support their teaching, some individually and some in groups. At the end of the work session, the students gathered together with their class teacher to describe why and how they had undertaken the task, and to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses. I commented to the teachers that I was not myself convinced about students' willingness to criticise each other's work objectively. (I have attempted this with students in some of my own courses from time to time, but have never found students to be really critical and hence to me, they often accepted standards that I would not accept as satisfactory.) The point however was made by one teacher that once you remove all marks the students do become more critical of themselves and one another. They have less to lose when the performance is not recorded for posterity.

I was told however that it is very difficult to fail an unsatisfactory student. Students can be advised not to continue with a course or prevented from proceeding to the next semester, but it is almost impossible to exclude a student from the college unless it can be shown that the student may do physical or emotional harm to children.

4) Every college must have an Education Board

Although the National Board specifies the broad curriculum areas and the methods by which students should be taught, the Swedes believe that there is still ample opportunity for them to develop the courses that reflect community needs and special areas of interests within a college.

To ensure balanced planning, the National Board requires that the Academic or Education Board of each college be made up of staff and student representatives, municipal authorities, teacher representatives from local preschools and union representatives.

5) The Program must be Organised around Four Main Subject Areas

The National Board says that every preschool teacher training college will provide a program with four main areas of study. The amount of time allocated to each subject varies according to the type of course - 100, 80, 50 point, ordinary or bi-lingual.

- Communication - focuses on developing students' communication skills as well as learning how to guide the development of children's verbal and non verbal communication skills.

- Civics - teaches students about Swedish law in relation to children and families, about the responsibilities and services provided by municipalities and about the role and responsibilities of various relevant unions.

- Methodology - is concerned with the theory and the application of child development with particular focus on preparing the environment for children's play and the value of various activities to children's overall development.

- Practice - the amount and frequency of practice depends on the type of course. A 50 point course has very little practice while a 100 point course would have about five blocks of between 6 and 8 weeks over 5 terms (semesters).

6) Students will be trained to teach Children 7 months to 7 years in Preschool Settings

Graduates of preschool colleges in Sweden probably have less choice in relation to the type of teaching setting in which they will work than does the Australian preschool teacher. Day care with children 7 months to 7 years is the largest employer of preschool teachers, followed by sessional preschool/kindergarten. It would now be unusual for a preschool teacher to be employed in Fritidshem (leisure care) because a special training program exists to prepare people for this work. To be a hospital preschool teacher you must have completed a one year post graduate course for which you may be selected after 10 years of experience in the field.

As far as it could be determined, preschool teachers at this stage do not work with Family Day Care. There is no coordinator role as we know it; Family Day Care mothers are simply registered with the local Social Welfare Department which is responsible for standards, selection of family day care mothers and the placement of children.

10.2 General Areas of Interest that Emerged from Discussion with Teacher Educators in Two Colleges in Sweden

The Colleges visited were:

- Forskoleseminariet - Solna, Stockholm (single college campus)

- Forskoleseminariet - Lärarhögskolan - Malmö (multi college campus)

10.2.1 Applications for Selection - Applications for

admission to colleges and the selection of students is handled centrally. Individual colleges or the community appear to have no say in the selection process. In 1979 about 8000 applications were received from all over Sweden. From these, 4000 students were placed for training in two intakes, Spring and Autumn.

For the purposes of selection a number of criteria have been identified at the State or National Board level. Each criterion attracts a number of points. The 4000 students who receive the highest point ratings recieve an offer for a place in a college.

The critical criteria are:

- previous child care training and experience;
- general work experience;
- community service;
- high school grades (grades are still given in the Higher School).

In Sweden considerable importance is placed on encouraging school leavers to experience the world of work before undertaking tertiary studies. I was told that the majority of students in preschool colleges are over 25 years.

10.2.2 The Male Preschool Teacher - Although women in Sweden have, and are continuing, to become involved in the so called traditional male occupations (in 1976 12% of industrial power in Sweden was woman power), it is thought that men have been a little slower in their movement into the traditional female occupations. For example, it is said that no more than 3% of trained preschool teachers are men. The Malmö College said that 10% of its students were male. However, staff were of the opinion that although no official figures were available, it believed the attrition rate for male students was considerably higher than for female students. Staff at the Malmö College say that male students have said that the female dominated environments of sessional and full day care centres make them unattractive working environments for many men. They find the "women's talk" in the staff room difficult, a comment which has been made by some male students at the Nursery School Teachers' College in Sydney.

10.2.3 Payment to Teachers for Teaching Practice - Until very recently, teachers have been paid for

having students and in some cases may still be receiving payment because of union difficulties. However in 1978, the State of Sweden, that is, Parliament, decided that teaching practice was the community's responsibility and in the future, colleges should pay the community for each student placed in a community's preschool centre. Hence payments go to the appropriate local community Boards of Social Welfare. Payment is at the rate of 30 SK for a five hour day (approximately $7.00). It is expected that the community will use the money to pay relief teachers so that cooperating teachers who are responsible for students can meet more regularly for briefing and evaluation sessions with college staff and at the preschool. This is part of the policy of the team approach to training student teachers.

10.2.4 Organisation of Teaching Practice - At Solna I was told that this had changed since the method of payment had changed. Placement of students or allocation of students to preschools for teaching practice had now become the responsibility of the community, that is, the municipal boards of Social Welfare. The college contacts the community preschool advisers and together they discuss the number of places needed and available. The community finalises the placements and informs the college.

Preschool students in Sweden undertake all of their teaching practice in block sessions which range from 4 to 8 weeks per semester depending on the type of course and its stage. Teaching practice is generally preceded and followed by in-college blocks and most practice blocks are broken in the middle for one full week when students return to college for a full appraisal of their performance and special field related workshop sessions.

Students are always placed with a trained preschool teacher. There are no mechanisms for the selection of teachers. Students are generally regarded as extra staff and taking into account that the Higher School Children's Nurse Course has substantial segments of two days per week of practice, preschools are rarely without some practising students.

The 100 point courses require more teaching practice than the 80 and 50 point courses, with the 50 point course having the least amount of practice.

10.2.5 Assessment of Students - No grades are given for any subjects. The emphasis is on continuous self and group evaluation. As much of the work involves group project activities of a practical nature, students get a lot of opportunity to develop self appraisal skills.

At the end of each semester students are told whether or not they have passed. Not passing (Swedes never use the word fail) happens when students do not attend regularly or do not complete the work expected. The quantity of group tasks puts quite a lot of responsibility on to each student to cooperate with the team or group.

In teaching practice evaluation is the joint responsibility of the student, the cooperating preschool teacher and the college methodology lecturers who visit students during practice. At Solna there are three regular in-college appraisal sessions associated with each practice block. Teachers, students and lecturers all participate in an introductory, a middle and a final evaluation session. Evaluation always appears to be verbal and there are no final written reports.

10.2.6 Lecturers' Qualifications - Most preschool college teachers are not trained preschool teachers. Rather they are psychologists and special subjects teachers such as Woodwork teachers, Art teachers and Music teachers. However, all methodology classes are taught by experienced preschool teachers. These people have all completed a one year course which has prepared them to be a methodology teacher in a preschool training college.

10.2.7 Post Graduate Courses for Teachers - There are in Sweden now a number of courses in special colleges which enable an experienced preschool teacher to become some kind of specialist teacher. I was told, for example, at Lararhogskolan, Malmö, of a number of different programs available at this multi-college institution. The programs are not part of the preschool training school but take place in separate on-campus post graduate school. The programs include training to work with:

- handicapped preschool children;
- children in hospitals;
- children with speech problems in preschools;
- preschool trainees, as methodology lecturers in preschool training colleges.

The courses are all highly selective and usually require that applicants have at least ten years of experience.

10.3 Summary

My overall impression is that preschool teacher training is somewhat lacking academically, being at this stage largely vocational in its orientation. Few courses are research-based; program content and methods are taught mainly through materials and activities, rather than the study of curriculum, and course offerings in the social science areas are limited. In addition, there is a limited amount of current overseas book material on the theory and research of early childhood. Considering that all Swedish students have studied English extensively at school, this is surprising.

Given all of this, it is perhaps not surprising that very few preschool teachers go on to study at university level and even fewer complete post graduate studies. As a result, Sweden lacks a pool of highly qualified preschool-oriented researchers and educators.

Nevertheless, the most exciting and interesting features of Swedish preschool teacher education are the teaching methodologies. Students experience in class the teaching methods that will be expected of them when they are teachers. Likewise, the constant focus on group processes and evaluation must be effective in producing teachers who are good communicators with children, team members and the community of parents.

11. THE SWEDISH SCHOOL SYSTEM

11.1 The Comprehensive School

This represents a nine year program of compulsory schooling.

Junior Level - Grades 1 - 3

Middle Level - Grades 4 - 6

Senior Level - Grades 7 - 9

The Education Act and Syllabus Guidelines in Sweden state that "Comprehensive school students shall belong to the same student group throughout the school period and that classes are to have the most diversified make-up possible as regards social and economic backgrounds of students. No students are transferred on account of their scholastic performance. Streaming is never practised and it is becoming less common to organise special remedial classes for students with difficulties in schools". p 8, Swedish Board of Education 1976.

The above mentioned features together with the fact that teachers are not allowed to grade children's work are consistent with the Swedish ideal of removing any social structures that may work to create inequality between people.

A teacher trains for one level only, that is, for the Junior, the Middle or Upper Level. Each teacher follows a class for three years, that is, he/she begins with the class in either Grade 1, 4 or 7 depending on the level the teacher has trained for and stays with these children for three years. This is part of a State policy that puts much emphasis on developing strong personal relationships and the importance of group cohesion. The teachers to whom I spoke said that they believed that most teachers thought that this was good. One teacher remarked that she believed that it encourages a strong sense of responsibility towards the children's learning.

25 children is the upper limit for Grades 1 - 3. Children in their first year of school have approximately two hours of ½ class teaching and two hours of whole group teaching per day. The day is organised so that half the class comes to school at about 8.30 am and leaves at about 1.00 pm. The other half of the class comes at 10.30 am and goes home at 3.00 pm. All children at comprehensive school receive a mid-day meal free of charge which they eat in a well-appointed dining room. To avoid noise and confusion, different classes usually take the meal at different times, that is, there are several sittings.

Wherever possible, handicapped children must be integrated with normal children in the classroom. Special resource teachers are available for extra classroom support.

In 1974 the Swedish Government set up a commission to inquire into Teacher Education in Sweden (Swedish Commission on Teacher Education). Its recommendations which are now before Parliament seem likely to lead to many changes in the future organisation of the Comprehensive School.

11.2 A Day at Smedshagsskolan, Vallingby

This school of 225 children has 9 classes at the Junior and Middle Levels of the comprehensive school. It is an annexe of a larger, nine grade school where the children will go for their senior level classes.

At Smedshagsskolan, like other schools in Sweden, the teachers start with a group of children as they enter a new level of school and remain with them for three years. Each class had about 25 children.

The class teacher teaches subjects such as Swedish, Maths, Social Science, English (from Grade 4) and religion, while special subject teachers teach the children woodwork and handcrafts. Subjects appeared to be taught in a fairly traditional classroom setting with children seated at tables or desks in rows. Each lesson lasts about forty minutes. In all of the classes I visited throughout the day, I found teachers speaking very warmly to children and there was a lot of verbal participation.

Classes are not combined at this school for team teaching except on special project days when subject areas are integrated. All class teachers however have spare time when children are with the specialist subject teachers and part of this time has to be used to team teach with another class teacher. I saw this happen when the Grade 1 teacher went to the Grade 4 class (the class she had taught for the three previous years). Teachers say that they become very closely identified with their children because they are with them for such a long period.

Throughout the day I was escorted about the school by Lars and Helen, two children from Grade 6. They took me to lunch in the school dining room, went with me to each class and invited me to participate in their own class English lesson. One got the overall impression that the children are confident and outgoing. The teachers told me that they do not have any really serious discipline problems in their school, but that discipline is generally thought to be a problem in the Swedish school. Teachers believe that there is little that they can do to discipline children.
The school environment was spacious and well furnished. All classrooms opened onto a large carpeted foyer or resource area which contained the library, reading areas and class resource materials. I did not however see the area being used on the day of my visit. The building plan gave the impression of open teaching, but my

feeling was that the teaching methods were fairly traditional.

Other facilities in the school included a very large gym with change rooms, lockers, showers and equipment that we might expect to see in some of our larger and newer high schools. I was told that the gym is also used by the local community. In addition, a building attached to the school provided a full SIA (after school/leisure) program. Leisure leaders from SIA spend some time each day in the classroom with the class teachers while they learn how they can work together in an integrated way. Both teachers and leisure leaders however seemed unsure about how the integrated program can best be worked out.

11.3 Upper Secondary: two, three or four years of Non Compulsory Education

It is thought that between 80 and 85% of Sweden's children complete at least two years of upper secondary school. Each school offers two different lines of study:

- preparation for advanced study (usually involves a three or four year program);
- preparation for careers (mainly two years vocationally oriented courses such as the Child Nurse Training).

The National Swedish Board of Education 1976 states, "By comparison with the corresponding educational stage in most western European countries, the substance of Swedish upper secondary education aims more at what the students will be doing after they leave school. In large part the line-by-line division and the official syllabus have been designed to allow for what the post secondary education on the one hand and the job world on the other have deemed to be the cardinal skills and achievements. At the same time, this school type is structured and subject mattered to reflect the unanimous political conviction that every young individual is entitled to a basic education which offers free options for the future and does not lock the individual into compartments". p 9.

12. SUMMARY

To conclude this report it is my intention to draw together what appeared to me to be the two most significant features affecting the services for and the life style of children in Sweden.

The Commitment to Children

This is everywhere. It cannot fail to make an impact on an Australian visitor. There is a strong realisation that the nation has responsibility to parents and children, that everything possible should be done to protect them and to provide them with good conditions for living and growing. The following are just a few of the many impressions:

Politics Children and their future environment were the focus of a number of the 1979 election posters;

Occasional Care The largest department store in Sweden has a very well equipped and presented play environment and care facility where willing children can play for a maximum of two hours while parents shop. One got the impression that this was a service for children as well as parents. I called in briefly to the centre four times during my month in Stockholm and never did I see one crying or unoccupied child;

Public Transport Parents take their infants and toddlers on public transport in large elevated prams and strollers. There is never any shortage of willing hands to help a parent on or off a bus and all railway stations have lifts to all platforms. I saw no children being pushed in crowded areas in low strollers where all that they can see is adult legs - no children being dragged unwillingly along city streets and no parents who showed obvious signs of fatigue due to trying to cope with children who can't cope.

Parks These offer excellent surroundings and facilities for people of all ages. For parents and toddlers, for example, many parks have an enclosed area which is a prohibited area for older children. This gives the smaller children the opportunity for undisturbed play if their parents think that this is what they need.

The Law The law recognises the right of children in many ways in Sweden. For example, it is now an offence for any person to smack a child. I asked people about this law and learned that there are a number of laws that have associated social rather than legal sanctions. The Swedes believe that this is a good law and that most people are not in the habit of regularly smacking their children.

From January 1980 no more war toys can be sold in Sweden. An Act of Parliament on this issue was narrowly defeated early in 1979, but an agreement has now been entered into by manufacturers and retailers, led in this initiative by the Swedish Council for Children's Play.

A Cohesive Framework

There are three significant components which affect the quality of need identification, planning, development and implementation of services. The components work together to provide a structure that helps achieve compatability with need and equality in standards throughout the country.

Firstly, the Swedish Government stands ready to establish a commission to enquire into any area, including children's services, where the status quo seems to be incompatible with the broad policy of creating equality of opportunity. The Family Aid Commission, for example, has now been in existence for several years and its ongoing planning functions mean that the State is constantly involved in the process of formative evaluation of its services. The Commission on Child Centres is another example (see Section 6.4).

Secondly, relevant State departments take recommendations accepted by a ministry or parliament from a commission's report, and develop policy for implementation that will be compatible with the politics of Sweden. These take the form of regulations and they affect staffing and building standards, methods of program organisation and in some cases the type of program that is to be provided.

Thirdly, the municipality/community assesses how many people need various types of services and how they can best be organised within that community. The State and the community work together in that the community keeps the State well informed about its needs, its plans, its success and failures and the State supports the community by encouraging local innovations which in turn feed back to the planning stage by influencing the direction of future commissions.

AF:fb
February 1980

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* Note: All of these publications were acquired by the author during her visit.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF EACH VISIT

August 28, National Board of Health and Welfare.
Contact: Lena Lindberg

Here I learned about the division of control for Early Childhood Services between the State and the community. The National Board of Health and Welfare develops and disseminates policy and implementation guidelines to the municipalities throughout Sweden. The State funds Early Childhood Services through the Board, providing just over 50% of the total costs.

August 28, Swedish Council for Children's Play.
Contact: Eva Insulander

The Swedish Council for Children's Play is funded through the National Board of Health and Welfare. However, it has its own council and is seen as an autonomous organisation. The council works to promote community awareness towards the play needs of children, to research and to write about play and to advise the National Board in relation to policy development in this area.

The Council has just been instrumental in obtaining an agreement that will prohibit the sale of war toys in Sweden from the beginning of 1980. It hopes in the near future to obtain a similar agreement between manufacturers and retailers in relation to the sale of dolls that exploit female and male sexuality.

Towards the end of my trip, I saw a very well presented travelling exhibition/workshop at the Malmö Art Gallery which communicated the need to encourage children in pursuits that involve contact with natural materials,the development of creative abilities and the development of work skills and life long interests. The entire exhibition was a series of encounters supported by graphics that described both the historical significance of the experience for Swedish children and the value that it has for children in today's society. People employed by the Council were on hand to encourage people to participate as well as to look.

August 29, Farjestadsvägen Day Care Centre.
Contact: Barbro Oldmark

This centre, situated on the edge of a forest 10 kilometres from the centre of Stockholm caters for 50 children aged 7 months to 7 years. The children are in four groups. Two of the groups have children 7 months to 2½ years and two have children 2½ years to 7 years.

Next door to this day care centre, but sharing the same playground, is a sessional preschool centre providing morning and afternoon sessions for 6 year olds. The two centres are autonomous, each with a teacher-in-charge but the staff of both centres get together for meetings once per month.

August 30, Stockholm Social Welfare Board
Contact: Birgit Rönnblad

The Stockholm municipality is responsible for 1,000 children's centres. The Stockholm Early Childhood Services, like all services in Sweden, are funded through the State, the municipality and parent fees.

With Birgit Rönnblad a visit was made to a day care centre which occupied the basement, ground and first floors of a newly renovated city building. The program provided day care for 30 children 7 months to 7 years and 10 children 7 to 10 years. It is regarded as innovative in that it is responding to the Family Aid Commission's recommendation that day care programs in Sweden should become less material oriented and more reality oriented. Here the staff were attempting to involve children in the everyday activities associated with home life. Regular activities include shopping, cooking, cleaning, planning and outings. Like many innovative projects that are initiated at the municipal level, this program will be evaluated by the Stockholm authority.

August 31, University of Stockholm
Contact: Sten Rönnberg, Bertil Sundin, Gerda Christenson, Ole Nordland

This visit was undertaken to find out about the university's research and evaluation activities in the early childhood field. I was told about some small individual research projects such as one carried out by Gerda Christenson which concluded that one in seven children in preschools in Sweden has some kind of deviant social behaviour such as excess aggression, hyperactivity or anxiety. The University has not undertaken any evaluation of specific programs or general initiatives in the early childhood field.

August 31, A Visit to some of Stockholm's supervised Playgrounds run by the Parkleken organisation

There are 50 of these in the municipality of Stockholm. One playground may have as many as five full time supervisers depending upon its size and the number of children using it. Three supervisers per park is probably the most usual. In each park at least one of the supervisers would have completed the two year course for people wishing to work in out of school/ leisure programs.

The parks provide supervised activities for children from 8.30 am to 5.00pm. The supervisers are not responsible for the children in any way. It is expected that younger children will always be accompanied by adults or older children. The superviser's job is to look after the equipment and to make available a range of activities and games. Most parks have a large shed which is used mainly in the winter. Here children can sew, draw, cook, play board games, learn to weave and knit, do woodwork and a variety of creative activities.

Outside there is always a large paved area for ball and rope

games and roller skating.

Most of the supervised parks include a program that allows parents of preschool children to leave them for supervised play on an occasional basis for no more than two hours during the mid-morning. This is the quiet time of the day at the playground - the period when children over 7 are all in school.

A perhaps superficial impression was that the Parkleken playgrounds lacked imagination. They all had the same fixed equipment that had been designed with safety in mind to the detriment of adventure and adaptability to children's needs and interests. Considering the number of supervisers, whose numbers are generally boosted by volunteer workers, I was surprised that there was not more outdoor provision for experiences with natural materials and adventure/socio dramatic play. A very general impression was that many of the play leaders I saw did not seem to be particularly challenged by their job.

September 3, National Board of Education
Contact: Elsa Warby

The National Board of Education is the State Authority responsible for developing general school policy that is in line with the decisions taken through the Ministry of Education.

School policy throughout Sweden requires:

- 9 years of compulsory school (the Comprehensive School), which is organised into 3 levels and teachers teach the same group of children for 3 years at either junior, middle or upper level school;
- that no grades be given in the junior or middle levels;
- that a hot meal is served daily in the school dining room where teachers eat with their children;
- that all children in the first year of school have approximately two hours per day of half class teaching;
- the gradual introduction of a leisure program (SIA) that is to become integrated with the total school day.

September 3, Department of Educational Research - Stockholm Institute of Education
Contact: Professor Bengt-Erik Anderson

The Stockholm Institute of Education is comprised of a number of colleges which prepare teachers and recreation leaders to work with children and adolescents from the preschool to upper secondary school. The Department of Educational Research carries out research programs which focus on teacher training, the teaching process, the development of children and various aspects of their situation/environment.

September 3, Erfaremhetsverkstan, Kulun (a work experience playground)
Contact: Michael Crisp

I was told that Erfaremhetsverkstan means experience with real work

skills. The experience is provided in a section of a park at Kulun alongside the Parkleken supervised playground. Two caravans and some sheds built by the local community provide indoor work and recreation places.

The program has the support of Parkleken and the Swedish Council for Children's Play. It was conceived by Michael Crisp who originally worked with the Parkleken Movement. Michael's dream is to provide a place where people can use and develop skills with wood, stone, metals, etc. He wants it to both serve and service the community. For example, when the local day care centre needed a play house, it was provided by a group of boys from the senior classes of the local comprehensive school in school time under the direction and guidance of Michael and his three full time fellow workers.

It was hard to get a true picture of how many different community groups are using the area and its personnel. I actually made two visits, both in the afternoon and found that on each occasion it was being used by about eight boys for after school recreation. They were constructing large go-carts. Most people in the area live in flats and this would be the only place to make and store such a vehicle.

I suspect for a number of reasons that the project may not as yet be quite what was originally envisaged.

September 4, Esselte Stadium and L E A B
Contact: Ake Dahlström

Esselte Stadium and LEAB are the two main suppliers of educational equipment to early childhood services throughout Sweden.

All preschools and leisure centres get an annual equipment grant from their municipality for each child. Consequently, centres are all well equipped by Australian standards.

Esselte Stadium and LEAB handle both locally manufactured material as well as equipment imported from other Scandinavian countries, Holland, Germany and Switzerland.

Of particular interest was the amazing range of material for craft and weaving, the indoor gross motor material, the heavy duty outdoor wheel toys and some of the equipment designed for children under two years. The Nursery School Teachers' College was given a full set of catalogues by Ake Dahlstrom who was my very excellent host for one day.

September 5, Smedshagsskolan, Vällingby
Contact: Mats Brander

Here I was met by Lars and Helen who showed me around their school and accompanied me to different classes throughout the day.

The school is an annexe of a larger Comprehensive School. It contains nine classes in the junior and middle levels.

A special feature of the school was the SIA Leisure Program which takes place in an attached building with six beautifully planned and equipped rooms providing for a vast range of interests. The centre is open to all children after school at no cost. Children enrolled in the program because their parents work, pay fees which entitles them to food including an evening meal at the centre.

September 6, Stockholm Education Authority - Traffic Education Section
Contact: Bengt Lindberg

National Traffic Education Foundation
Contact: Perry Håkansson, Jan Olof Larsson

Police Department - Traffic Education Section
Contact: Christa Hök

I was looked after for the day by Bengt Lindberg. It began at Bengt's office where he explained the comprehensive Swedish traffic education program that is integrated into the total school system. Bengt is responsible for the program's implementation in schools belonging to the Municipality of Stockholm. He works closely with the National Traffic Foundation, the Stockholm Police Department and the teachers in schools.

The program actually begins in preschool. Here police people make regular visits to centres with the object of communicating that a police person is a friendly person. They simply join in the program activities to talk and play with the children.

The program in the comprehensive school is as follows:

Class 1: A Punch and Judy Show performed by two police people Later in the day I met these police including Christa Hök who writes and produces the plays. I also saw on video one of the plays performed at schools. The show communicated the friendly and helpful role of the police and encouraged and got a lot of participation from the children.

Class 2: A cycling lesson. It includes class instruction and games aimed at teaching the rules of bike safety on the road, followed by one hour of practice with the police in the school grounds.

Class 3: A visit from the criminal police - which focuses on introducing law and punishment in relation to criminal acts such as theft and acts of aggression against people.

Class 4: A cycling lesson - one hour in the classroom followed by an hour out on the roads with the police and the class teacher.

Class 5: Cycling practice on the roads, plus another visit from the criminal police, focusing on crime prevention.

Class 6: Crime prevention lesson.

Class 7: Lesson on mini-bike riding - "Moped".

Class 8: The Narcotics Section of the police talk to children about drugs.

At all times the class teacher is expected to participate in these lessons and is given help if required by Bengt on how to follow up the ideas with more information, games, discussions, debates, etc.

In the Higher School the police teach children who are already licensed drivers, advanced driving skill.

At the National Traffic Education Foundation I was told about the School Safety Patrols and given a great deal of beautifully planned and presented material focusing on traffic awareness and education.

September 7, Forskileseminariet 1: Solna
Contact: Marianne Åkerman

This is one of three preschool training colleges in the Stockholm region. The colleges together form one department of the Stockholm Institute of Education. Solna, with 900 students, prepares people in three different types of courses (depending on previous background experience) to work with children 7 months to 7 years in day care setting and sessional preschool for 6 year olds.

Preschool Teacher Education is discussed in Section 10 of this Report.

September 10, Rikvadsvig Day Care Centre
Contact: Vera Alexander

This centre had four groups, two groups of children under 3 years and two groups of children 3 years to 7 years. The total enrolment is 50 children.

At this centre I saw some of the best examples of care giving, in a very child centred program.

I also saw a very intense and prolonged episode of "cowboy play" involving acts of violence that turned to intense aggression when a third boy attempted to be admitted to the play. The teacher who watched it all with me and guided the children through their outburst later commented that although the sale of war toys is now to be prohibited, children are still exposed constantly to violence on television.

September 13, Malmö Social Welfare Board
Contact: Kerstin Rivald

Here I learned of the Malmö Municipality initiatives and responsibilities in the area of children's services. A description of organisation at the municipal level through the Malmö example appears in Section 9 of this Report.

September 14, Malmö Preschool Training College

Contacts: Ingrid Lindros and
Karin Linderoth

This college is one of a number of teacher training colleges sharing the one campus, Lärarhögskolan. Preschool Teacher Training is described in Section 10 of this Report.

September 14, Lindängehus Day Care Centre

This is one of three day care centres in Malmö that has mixed groups from 7 months to 7 years. This initiative is described in Section 8.3.3.